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MINEHEAD URBAN DISTRICT COUNCIL.

MEDICAL OFFICER OF HEALTH'S INTERIM REPORT FOR 1945.

The population of the town shows a slight downward trend on the previous year. There has been a gradual diminution in the number of evacuated persons as their homes in various parts of the country became available once more. Most of the private houses, hotels and boarding houses remained full. During the summer months the influx of visitors was considerable and taxed the resources of the town to their capacity.

There was, during this period, some temporary overcrowding. The evacuated schools which had found a temporary home in the town had practically all returned by the end of the year.

The health of the town has not shown any marked improvement during the year under survey. The reasons for this are to be found in the dietary and the overwork imposed by war conditions. The long hours entailed in obtaining the necessary rations have undoubtedly added to the psychological depression which seems to be universal.

The health of the juvenile population has remained good and a mild epidemic of measles was the only threat to its maintenance.

Water Supply.

The main reservoir at Nutscale has maintained an abundant supply during the year. The supply at all times has been satisfactory and free from contamination. Periodical examinations are undertaken by the County Laboratories and the reports have been satisfactory. The small village of Woodcombe, which had given rise to some anxiety as to the quality of its supply, has now been dealt with and a new supply has been installed which is of excellent quality and entirely free from contamination.

Alterations and replacements in distribution will be called for by the programme for new houses to be built under the Post-War housing scheme. The erection of 76 houses in Alcombe will call for a new reservoir and a further 4" pipe. New mains will also be required in the Avenue and along Quay Street. Practically all the houses in the town are supplied from public water mains direct to the houses. The few exceptions are a few cottages which are served by stand-pipes from the public supply.

Sewage Disposal.

The sewage disposal has been satisfactory and no structural changes have been undertaken. Scavenging has been adequately maintained. No new works or improvements have been undertaken during the year.

Housing.

The demand for houses is very considerable. About 300 applications have been received for Council Houses, 200 of which are legitimate, the remaining third by people who wish to live in Minehead although not employed there.

The programme before the Council at the end of the year is for 25 for the first year, 50 for the second

and 34 for the third. In preparation for the erection of these houses, sites have been obtained and prepared in Poundfield Road, Alcombe Lodge, Quarry Close, Orchard Road and Periton Lane. During the year two houses of the Council House type were erected by private enterprise. The Local Authority have six permanent houses in course of erection.

Overcrowding.

Only one case of overcrowding was reported during the year which was dealt with.

Infectious Diseases.

A mild, but widespread epidemic of measles occurred and a very mild outbreak of whooping cough. A few sporadic cases of scarlet fever also occurred. Infectious diseases have been treated at the local Isolation Hospital. The County Authority have under their consideration the advisability of closing this Institution.

Disinfection of premises after infectious diseases is carried out by the Council's servants. Disinfection is also carried out after cases of an unpleasant or unhygienic nature on the recommendation of the attending medical practitioner.

With regard to scabies, only disinfection of the affected premises is undertaken by the Council. Cases which do not respond to domiciliary treatment are sent to a Centre for this purpose on the recommendation of the medical practitioner responsible.

The local institution, the Minehead and West Somerset Hospital, serves the town and the surrounding country for surgical, medical and obstetrical requirements.

The Maternity Department deals with all difficult labours and as many uncomplicated cases as space will allow. The accommodation, however, is strictly limited, and a large percentage of the cases falls to the care of the District Midwives.

I am happy to report that this institution has maintained its efficiency and answered all demands made upon it in spite of the gravest difficulties caused by shortage of nursing and domestic staffs.

The Honorary Staff, although depleted, has at all times fulfilled its obligations.

Clinics for Infant Welfare and Ante-Natal treatment are maintained in the town under the direction of Dr. H.M. Chappel.

Tuberculosis and Venereal Disease Clinics are held in the town and are under the control of and maintained by the County Council.

The incidence and mortality of Tuberculosis in the area remains unchanged.

I am able to report that the extra work entailed by Civil Defence measures and reduced staff has not in any way impaired the efficiency of the Public Health Services.

In this connection I should like to express my regret at the retirement of your Town Clerk, Mr. Mansfield, and once more express my appreciation of his kindness, courtesy and efficiency.

September, 1946.

W. BAIN, M.B., B.S., Lond.,
Medical Officer of Health.